

Among Our Indians.

AFTER an absence of many years, I went back to live among my people for few months, and I saw again some of their customs which must appear to white people as very strange, and sometimes very wrong—but I think it is because they do not understand.

The Potlatch is always one of our chief affairs. It is our way of paying for the burial of our dead. The Indians would not think it honouring the dead, just to pay in money the people who help to bury their dead, just the same as they pay the people who build their house—that is a common way, but to pay for a funeral they have to save for years, and the workers are willing to wait for *long* time, years and years, to be paid in what we think the right way, I think you would call it etiquette, and the Indians are very particular about it.

The Potlatch and the Indian dance always go together, and they are always held about the fall of year, I don't know exactly the reason why, may be because it is for the dead, but the Indians would never think of having the Yale Indian dance any other time than near winter time or at the first snow-fall.

I will try and tell you in a few words about the Indian dance. It is not fun like the white peoples' dance, it is always rather mournful and makes you feel inclined to cry. The dance I went to this Fall was given by Chief Sam. It was a big affair, but he had his son Peter and his daughter Mary to help him. He had a large number of friends from North Bend and Spuzzum, and all the Yale people, and some from the Lower Fraser too.

The guests were all comfortably settled in old Tom's big house. Poor Tom can no longer see, but it is astonishing how he went about talking to his dear "tillicums," and knowing almost everyone around him. So Tom entertained them until supper time. Chief Sam would often come in and tell his guests, in a long speech, how glad he was to see them, and thank them for coming, because he knew they had come a long way from their homes to comfort him. You see it was something like a funeral feast, although Chief Sam's wife died nearly nine years ago. The funny part was that Sam could only talk in Yale Indian, and a great many of his friends were Thompson and they could not understand, but they knew he meant something kind.

When supper was over the dance began, first some planks were put round the room in front of the people who were sitting on the ground, and then small sticks were given to them, there was no kind of music but every one just beat time, who knew how, to the dance, and every one who could sing the dancer's song joined in it, but if any one made a mistake in beating time, that offended the dancers. The first one who danced at this party was an old woman, and she began moving slowly waving her arms about to the time of the beating sticks, and the singing and all was so mournful, then it got a little louder and faster, and then louder and faster still, but altogether in time, singing, beating and dancing. When the old woman got tired, someone else began, and so on till all had their turn. I do not mean everyone danced, only those who knew how, and they were mostly the very old people. Old Tom,